



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

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Barrett Sets Historic Goal to Impact Infant Mortality *City of Milwaukee seeks increased partnership with community to reduce African American infant deaths by 15% and overall infant deaths by 10%*

MILWAUKEE---Mayor Tom Barrett and Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker announced an historic goal to reduce infant mortality in the City of Milwaukee by 2017.

From 2008-2010, there were 340 infant deaths in Milwaukee. For every 1,000 infants born during that time period, just over 10 infants died before their first birthday. This number, while bad enough, also hides stark disparities: African American infants were 2.6 times more likely to die than Caucasian infants (infant mortality rates of 14.1 vs. 5.4 deaths per 1,000 live births for this three year period. Milwaukee's African American infant mortality rate is worse than the overall rate of at least 35 countries around the world. It is also higher than the African American infant mortality rates of many other large US cities, such as New York and Chicago.

Today, Barrett announced a goal to reduce the overall infant mortality rate (IMR) by at least 10% by 2017. In order to focus efforts on the population that is most impacted by infant mortality, and to begin to reduce Milwaukee's unacceptable racial disparities in infant mortality, he set a simultaneous goal of reducing infant mortality among African-Americans by at least 15%.

The final target is the 3-year average infant mortality rate of 2015-2017, and the reduction will be compared to the most recent 3-year average baseline (2008-2010). Three year rolling-averages are used because single year rates are too statistically unstable to be reliable indicators of progress. Specifically, by 2017, the goal is to reduce Milwaukee's overall infant mortality rate by at least 10%, from 10.4 to no more than 9.4 deaths per 1,000 live births, and to reduce the African-American infant mortality rate by at least 15%, from 14.1 to no more than 12.0 deaths per 1,000 live births.

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“Milwaukee has never had an overall three-year average infant mortality rate under 10, and we have never had a black infant mortality rate of less than 13 in any three-year period,” said Mayor Barrett. “These goals are important and historic. Infant mortality is an incredibly complex issue. We are making progress through increased awareness of the various causes of infant deaths like prematurity, unsafe sleep, and access to quality prenatal care. But the fact is, we need to do more to impact the many multiple layers and root-cause factors that affect infant mortality. It’s a tall order, but with focus and increased partnerships with leaders like the United Way, and the Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families, I am confident that we can achieve our goal and save babies’ lives in Milwaukee.”

Earlier this year, Mayor Barrett and Commissioner Baker were joined by United Way of Greater Milwaukee to announce a new partnership to help combat the city’s infant mortality crisis. This partnership, using the very successful model to prevent teen pregnancy, was kicked off when United Way announced an initial grant of \$200,000 to the City of Milwaukee to improve birth outcomes in a targeted geographic area with the worst birth outcomes in the city: 53206, 53210, and 53216.

The United Way partnership is only one of several initiatives in Milwaukee to address the problem of infant mortality. Another is the Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families (LIHF), which is funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program and has been led through its initial phases by the Planning Council for Health and Human Services, along with many other community partners.

“The City of Milwaukee Health Department is a key partner in the effort to improve birth outcomes, but we cannot tackle this problem alone,” said Commissioner Baker. “The entire Milwaukee community needs to come together and direct our efforts towards our youngest members. We challenge residents, businesses, media and other organizations to help intervene. We challenge you to be innovative in doing the important work that must be done in order to achieve this goal and improve birth outcomes in Milwaukee.”



As part of today’s announcement to reduce infant mortality in Milwaukee, Mayor Barrett unveiled a provocative new print advertising campaign to further raise awareness of unsafe sleeping conditions, one of the most preventable causes of infant death in Milwaukee. The ad, development in partnership with SERVE Marketing, shows an infant sleeping in an adult bed with a butcher knife beside him with the tagline, “Your baby sleeping with you can be just as dangerous.” The ad will be seen on bus shelters throughout the city beginning November 14.